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# Heterosexual Women Arrested for Domestic Violence: Practice Guidelines for Assessment and Treatment Planning

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*Augsburg College*

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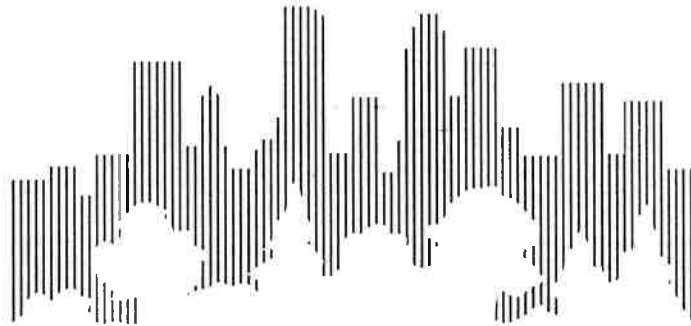
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## MASTERS IN SOCIAL WORK THESIS

Michele R. Braley

**MSW Thesis**  
**Homosexual Women Arrested for Domestic Violence:  
Practice Guidelines for Assessment  
and Treatment Planning**

1996

**Heterosexual Women Arrested for Domestic Violence:  
Practice Guidelines for Assessment and Treatment Planning**

**Michele R. Braley**

**A Thesis  
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty  
of Augsburg College  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree  
Master of Social Work**

**Minneapolis, Minnesota**

**March 26, 1996**

**Unpublished work © 1996 Michele R. Braley**

MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK  
AUGSBURG COLLEGE  
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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Michele R. Braley

has been approved by the Examining Committee for the thesis requirements for the Master of Social Work Degree.

Date of Oral Presentation: March 26, 1996

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## **Abstract of Thesis**

### **Heterosexual Women Arrested for Domestic Violence: Practice Guidelines for Assessment and Treatment Planning**

#### **Research Study**

**Michele R. Braley**

**March 26, 1996**

Heterosexual women arrested for violence are often referred to supportive services similar to those provided for battered women although there is limited documentation to justify similar treatment. The results of a questionnaire mailed to 20 practitioners and researchers form the basis for practice guidelines to standardize assessment and treatment planning for heterosexual women arrested for domestic violence. The emphasis of the practice guidelines is on the complex assessment and intervention decisions that arise when a woman has been arrested for using violence in self-defense. Practice guidelines will assist practitioners in justifying decisions about interventions for women arrested for violence against male partners and assist practitioners in treating individuals arrested for violence uniformly.





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## I. Introduction

### Statement of Problem

Since 1984 when the Minneapolis Police Experiments (Sherman & Berk, 1984) suggested that mandatory arrest was a deterrent against future use of domestic violence, police departments have been encouraged to adopt pro-active policies against domestic violence. Pro-active approaches, including mandatory arrest<sup>1</sup> and pro-arrest<sup>2</sup> policies, have contributed to an increase in the number of women arrested for domestic violence (Buel, 1988; Hamberger, 1994). Although women are increasingly being arrested for domestic violence, their numbers are relatively small compared to the arrests of men. Bourg and Stock (1994), in a study of all domestic violence reports filed with the sheriff of a county in Florida (N=538), found that 91.6% of the arrested batterers were male while 8.4% were female.

Along with an increase in arrests of women there is growing concern among probation officers and domestic violence program practitioners that women are being unfairly arrested for domestic violence (Hamberger, 1994; Osthoff, 1991; Saunders, 1995). To reverse this unfair situation, practitioners may recommend that an arrested

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<sup>1</sup>Police who have probable cause to believe that a felony or misdemeanor domestic assault has occurred *must* arrest the primary perpetrator even if the officer did not witness the assault and does not have a warrant (Buel, 1988).

<sup>2</sup>Similar to a mandatory arrest policy except the officer has *permission* to arrest without a warrant and without witnessing the assault but is *not required* to make an arrest (Goolkasian, 1986).

woman receive battered women's services (instead of offender treatment or incarceration) although she was initially arrested for being a perpetrator of violence. At the same time, men arrested for domestic violence are still being recommended for incarceration or batterer treatment (Hamberger, 1994; J. Lewis, personal communication, June 16, 1995).

Anecdotal evidence reflects this tendency to treat heterosexual women arrested for violence as battered women while arrested men are treated as batterers. For example, the facilitator of a group for offenders of lesbian battering suggested that although heterosexual women arrested for violence are occasionally referred to the group she usually determines that battered women's services are more appropriate for these women (N. Hamlet, personal communication, July 10, 1995). A probation officer in a domestic violence unit stated that when a female client has also been victimized by the man with whom the woman was violent, the probation officer refers the woman to a support group for battered women and believes it is inappropriate for the woman to be treated as an offender (J. Lewis, personal communication, June 16, 1995).

Practitioners report that there is no standard assessment process to determine whether an arrested woman is more appropriate for battered women's services or offender services (N. Hamlet, personal communication, July 10, 1995, J. Lewis, personal communication, June 16, 1995). Although individual programs may have developed an evaluation process out of necessity, there is no evidence that these individual processes are being

standardized or disseminated. There is a need for practice guidelines to guide practitioners in responding appropriately and consistently to these women.

### Purpose and Overview of the Study

The purpose of this project is to develop practice guidelines that will improve how decisions are made regarding interventions for women arrested for domestic violence. Responses from a questionnaire mailed to 20 practitioners and researchers inform the development of practice guidelines that begin to standardize assessment and intervention decisions for heterosexual women arrested for domestic violence. The emphasis of the practice guidelines is on the complex assessment and intervention decisions that arise when a woman has been arrested for using violence in self-defense. Practice guidelines will assist practitioners in justifying decisions regarding interventions for women arrested for violence against male partners and assist practitioners in treating individuals arrested for violence uniformly.

Although lesbians do experience violence in their relationships this study will focus on heterosexual relationships since this researcher believes that responses to violence by heterosexual women are impacted by the fact that the woman has used violence against a man. Therefore, many of the issues raised in this paper are specific to heterosexual relationships.

Suzanne Steinmetz (1977-78) published a landmark article launching the debate about whether women or men are more violent in heterosexual relationships (e.g. Dobash, Dobash, Wilson & Daly, 1992; Saunders, 1988). This paper is not intended to contribute to this ongoing debate and will attempt to avoid "the popular but irrelevant argument about who is more violent" (Walker, 1989, p. 696). The purpose of this paper is to improve how decisions are made about interventions for women arrested for violence, regardless of how many women are arrested for violence.

### Research Questions

This study will focus on the following questions:

1. How does a practitioner accurately assess a heterosexual woman's use of violence against her male partner after the woman has been arrested for using violence?
2. What are the appropriate interventions for a heterosexual woman arrested for violence, particularly if the violence was used in self-defense?



## II. Review of Literature

Feminist theory, the ecological perspective, and the problem-solving model form the theoretical basis for this research project. This study is further informed by a literature review with a focus on the legal context of arrests, female offenders of domestic violence, assessing domestic violence, battering in lesbian relationships, and gender bias in the courts.

### Conceptual Framework

#### Feminist theory.

Although feminist theory has many definitions one common element of all feminist theory is the assumption of gender as a key element in understanding human behavior (Renzetti, 1994). All feminist theory is based on a belief that problems are gendered and that it is impossible to disregard the importance of one's gender (Leupnitz, 1988). Since feminist theory suggests that gender is relevant in the problem of violence then it follows that effective assessment and intervention tools should be gender-specific.

#### Ecological perspective.

General systems theory provides an epistemological framework for understanding and ordering the world. Within this framework the ecological perspective offers a metaphor by which the abstract concepts of general systems theory can be concretely applied (Compton &

Galaway, 1989; Hartman & Laird, 1983). The science of ecology studies the equilibrium between living things and their environments and the maintenance and enhancement of this equilibrium. The key implication of the ecological perspective for practitioners is that individuals can only be understood in their environment (Compton & Galaway; Germain, 1991; Hartman & Laird). When working with an individual the unit of attention includes the individual, family, environment, and transactional relationships among these systems. Transactional relationships occur when both entities are changed with consequences for both. This is in contrast to linear relationships where one entity changes the other. (Germain). The goal of the practitioner in applying this framework to practice is to maintain a dual focus which takes into consideration the individual without losing sight of the individual's environment.

#### Problem-solving model.

The problem-solving model assumes that "all human living is effective problem solving" (Compton & Galaway, 1989, p. 371). The key to effective problem-solving is accurate problem identification. Without an accurate understanding of a problem, intervention to correct the problem will fail. The problem-solving model supports the belief that in order to effectively work with a woman arrested for domestic violence one must first accurately assess the woman's role in the violence.

### Legal Context of Arrests for Domestic Violence

Until the early 1980's domestic violence was considered a private matter and police were often discouraged from becoming involved (Goolkasian, 1986). Since a 1984 study that suggested that mandatory arrest of the perpetrator of a domestic violence incident is a deterrent against future use of violence by the arrested individual (Sherman & Berk, 1984) police departments have been encouraged to take a more pro-active approach to domestic violence (e.g. mandatory arrest and pro-arrest policies) (Bourg & Stock, 1994; Goolkasian). Although some mandatory arrest policies state that only the primary perpetrator should be arrested (Hart, 1992) the implementation of mandatory arrest policies has led to an increase in dual arrests or both individuals being arrested (Buel, 1988).

Hamberger (1994) reported a 12-fold increase in women arrested for domestic violence in one Wisconsin city after Wisconsin passed a mandatory arrest law, compared to a two-fold increase for men in the same time period. Dual arrests have increased and more women have been arrested for domestic violence under pro-active arrest policies because police are under pressure to make an arrest (Hamberger & Potente, 1994; Sherman, Schmidt, Rogan, 1992), they misunderstand the dynamics of domestic violence (Bourg & Stock, 1994; Buel, 1988; Saunders, 1995) or they are resentful of limits placed on their discretion (Saunders, 1995).

### Female Offenders of Domestic Violence

There is an ongoing debate about whether heterosexual women are less violent, more violent or equally violent in their relationships with

other person?, (b) Who is afraid of whom?, (c) Has one partner changed her job, friends, socialization patterns, ideas, activities, in response to the other person's requirements, (d) Does either partner admit to abuse/violence against her partner and how does she explain it? (p. 7).

#### Verbal assessments.

Although interviews are commonly used in assessing violence in a relationship, several authors have noted discrepancies between husbands' and wives' verbal reports of violence within their relationships (Cascardi & Vivian, 1995; Langhinrichsen-Rohling & Vivian, 1994). Stets and Straus (1990), have attributed incongruities in reports of marital violence to under-reporting of severe violence by male perpetrators. Arias and Beach (1987) state that men and women may deny using violence due to social desirability, but social desirability does not affect self-reports about frequency and severity of violence. In addition, Arias and Beach found that social desirability did not impact self-reports of victimization.

Interestingly, incongruities between reports of violence are not limited to under-reporting of violence. Langhinrichsen-Rohling and Vivian (1994) observed in one study that 35% of the aggressive husbands and 43% of the aggressive wives over-reported their use of violence as compared with their spouses' reports. Furthermore, LaJeune & Follette (1994) found that women are more likely to take responsibility for violence in a relationship and men are more likely to blame their female partner for the violence.

the number of subjects who indicated on the CTS that they had "beat up" a male partner. Since female play is typically less violent than male play it is possible that females perceive their violent behavior to be of greater severity than males perceive similar behavior. Perhaps, "beat up" to some females is the same as "slapped" to some males. The CTS does not correct for differences in the way subjects might interpret the terms used in the CTS nor does it provide definitions which would help ground respondents' perceptions.

#### Gender of the assessor.

Another factor that may affect an assessment of violence is the gender of the assessor (Hamberger, Lohr, Bonge & Tolin, 1995). This exploratory study of the affect of gender of an assessor on an assessment examined whether a tendency to view women's violence as self-defensive and men's violence as controlling was a function of the gender of the individual making the determination. The study found considerable agreement between male and female assessors about the motivations for women's violence. Explanations for women's violence given by both male and female assessors included: expression of anger, retaliation for previous violence by male partner, coercion of male partner, attention seeking from male partner, escape from male's aggression, and the defense of oneself. Despite these similarities, the authors observed enough gender-specific tendencies in assessing violence to lead them to conclude that there is the potential for bias dependent on the assessor's gender.

violence in their relationship have not been able to assume that the presenting woman is the survivor solely because of gender. Practitioners working with lesbians have begun to develop criteria for assessing whether a woman is the primary aggressor or victim in a relationship to avoid jeopardizing the safety of the other members of a shelter or support group (Heer, 1992; Zemsky, 1990).

There is some debate about whether mutual battering exists in lesbian relationships. Because most researchers do not believe that 'mutual battering' exists, even when both women have used violence (Hart, 1986; Heer, 1992; Leeder, 1988; Renzetti, 1988; Zemsky, 1990) they believe it is possible (and necessary) to determine which woman is responsible for the battering so that appropriate interventions can be provided. Although some couples report mutually aggressive behavior (Lie, Schilit, Bush, Montagne & Reyes, 1991) these reports have been questioned because it is possible that women misinterpret all violence in their relationships as aggressive and women may not differentiate violence that was self-defensive (Zemsky).

The key to an assessment in lesbian relationships is determining whether violence was done with self-defense or abuse as the motivation (Heer, 1992; Lie, Schilit, Bush, Montagne & Reyes, 1991; Renzetti, 1988, 1992). Researchers have begun to present suggestions for assessing violence in lesbian relationships to respond to the perceived need for standardized assessment criteria (Hart, 1986; Heer; Leeder, 1988; Linda & Avreayl, 1986; Zemsky, 1990). These guidelines are summarized below.



1. The tone of voice or appearance of a woman is not an indicator of her position as a perpetrator or victim of violence (Hart, 1986 ; Zemsky, 1990).

2. Self-reports of violence may be misleading and need to be interpreted carefully since a victim may believe she was abusive and an abuser may believe she was victimized (Hart, 1986; Leeder, 1988; Zemsky, 1990).

3. Although a survivor of violence may express anger about her relationship or her partner this should not automatically be interpreted as proof that she has been abusive towards her partner (Linda & Avreayl, 1986).

4. Heer (1992) and Zemsky (1990) caution practitioners to err on the side of allowing a possible abuser into victim services rather than to deny services to a possible victim. In practice this translates to: When in doubt, give supportive services. Hart (1986) expands on this idea and suggests that women should even be offered services during the phase of assessing the woman's role in the violence.

In addition, Heer (1992) and Zemsky (1990) include specific assessment questions that cover topics such as referral source, precipitating incident, a description of the initial violent incident, and an assessment of the overall pattern of behavior. Heer suggests questions for counselors to ask themselves while Zemsky's questions are designed for the presenting individual. Hart (1986) and Zemsky suggest that from the answers to assessment questions a pattern of

### Proposed aspects of leniency.

Farnworth and Teske (1995) have proposed three distinct aspects of leniency: *typicality* - women are treated leniently when their charges are consistent with stereotypes of women, *selective chivalry* - white females are more likely to be treated leniently than females of color and *differential discretion* - leniency is more likely in informal processes (e.g. charge reduction) than in formal processes (e.g. final sentencing). For their study Farnworth and Teske analyzed 9,966 felony theft cases and 18,176 felony assault cases in California. The authors found no clear support for the typicality hypothesis; women accused of violent crimes were not treated more harshly than their male counterparts. The authors did find support for the selective chivalry hypothesis; there was a greater tendency for assaultive behavior by white women to be reduced to non-assault charges than similar behavior by African American women or Hispanic women. White males were also treated more leniently than African American or Hispanic males which led the authors to speculate that race may be a larger factor in leniency than gender. The authors found partial support for the differential discretion hypothesis.

### Charge reduction and sentencing.

Frazier, Bock and Henretta (1983) analyzed 291 pre-sentence investigation reports in one six-county judicial district in Florida to



determine the role of probation officers in differential sentences for male and female defendants. They concluded that being female increases a defendant's likelihood of receiving a non-incarceration recommendation from the probation officer. The authors surmised that the differential treatment of male and female defendants may have been related to probation officers' differing explanations for the causes of male and female crime. For example, a probation officer was more likely to believe a woman had committed a crime due to psychological or emotional problems while a man charged with a similar crime was believed to have committed the crime due to his criminal record or employment history. Incarceration was viewed as less appropriate for crimes committed due to psychological or emotional problems. Another possibility raised by the authors was that probation officers were responding to a lack of adequate facilities for women; probation officers were aware that prison space may be unavailable even if they preferred for a woman to be incarcerated.

Later Bishop and Frazier (1984) used the pre-sentence investigation reports used by Frazier, Bock and Henretta (1983) to compare charge reduction for men and women. The sample included felony and misdemeanor charges for all types of offenses, including violent crime. After studying variables such as absolute amount of charge reduction, the magnitude of the charge reduction received relative to the absolute reduction possible, and the maximum sentence possible for the charges, Bishop and Frazier found no evidence that there is a relationship between gender and charge reduction, even when they

or survivor in a couple experiencing violence, a similar type of recognition is just beginning to occur with heterosexual couples.

To respond to a perceived need for a standard assessment tool a study was designed to answer the following questions:

1. How does a practitioner accurately assess a heterosexual woman's use of violence against her male partner after the woman has been arrested for using violence?
2. What are the appropriate interventions for a heterosexual woman arrested for violence, particularly if the violence was used in self-defense?

### III. Methodology

An exploratory study was designed to collect information to address the two research questions: (a) How does a practitioner accurately assess a heterosexual woman's use of violence against her male partner after the woman has been arrested for using violence? (b) What are the appropriate interventions for a heterosexual woman arrested for violence, particularly if the violence was done in self-defense? This chapter will address key terms, research design, subject selection, data collection and analysis, limitations of the design, and protection of human subjects.

#### Concepts and Terms

*Assessment* refers to the process of determining whether an arrested woman is most accurately described as the survivor or perpetrator of violence in her relationship.

*Battered woman* is defined on the basis of Zemsky's (1990) framework for the definition of "batterer" given below. Accordingly, a "battered woman" is the person affected by the atmosphere of fear and intimidation created by a batterer.

*Battered women's services* are support groups, counseling or any service aimed at helping battered women, to the exclusion of batterers.

*Batterer* is a person who creates an **atmosphere of fear and intimidation** for another person through the use of physical, emotional or verbal violence (Zemsky, 1990). Without an atmosphere

of fear and intimidation, violent behavior will not be considered battering.

*Domestic violence program practitioners* include intake workers, battered women's support group facilitators, and providers of services for offenders of violence.

*Domestically violent women* is a term borrowed from Hamberger (1991) and will be used interchangeably with *women arrested for domestic violence*. Both terms reflect a hesitancy to label women as "batterers" given the possible differences between domestic violence perpetrated by males and that perpetrated by females.

*A Heterosexual woman*, for the purposes of this study, is a woman who is in a relationship with a male partner.

*An offender* is an individual arrested for domestic violence and may or may not be a *batterer*.

*Offender treatment* includes educational groups, counseling, or other interventions designed to meet the needs of individuals who have used violence against a partner, including legal interventions such as incarceration or community service.

*Partner and Significant other* indicate a marriage, cohabitation or outwardly monogamous relationship. For the purposes of this study these terms will refer to heterosexual couples unless otherwise indicated.

*Primary perpetrator* is the person considered responsible for initiating the violence in a relationship. The criteria for making this

determination will be developed, in part, through responses to the research questionnaire.

### Research Design

This study used a self-administered, mailed questionnaire to gather qualitative information from practitioners and researchers who have experience working with women arrested for domestic violence. The design used a mailed questionnaire since the sample population was geographically diverse.

The questionnaire was designed to gather information in two areas: (a) recommendations for assessment of whether an arrested woman was the perpetrator or survivor of violence in her relationship and (b) recommendations for intervention if a woman is arrested for using violence against a man by whom she has been previously abused. Questions were developed based on potential areas for assessment which were identified through the literature review and from conversations with practitioners. The findings from this questionnaire, in addition to those of a comprehensive literature review, were used to develop practice guidelines for how decisions are made about appropriate interventions for women arrested for domestic violence.

### Subject Selection

The sample population was obtained through the non-random technique of purposive sampling. The principal investigator used her knowledge about individuals who have experience working with

women arrested for domestic violence to generate a list of key informants to receive the questionnaire. Published research, social service directories, and the telephone directory were used to locate the mailing addresses of key informants. Addresses for 20 key informants were identified.

Questionnaires were mailed to probation officers, researchers, practitioners in domestic violence programs and others identified as knowledgeable about women arrested for domestic violence against a male partner. Researchers were included in the study for two reasons: a) there is a limited number of practitioners working in this field, and b) it was believed that authors could offer valuable insight to an emerging issue. Respondents were only asked to indicate on the questionnaire whether they were "researchers", "practitioners" or "both". Because only four known probation officers were mailed the questionnaire, probation officers were asked to include themselves in the "practitioner" category.

Questionnaire recipients were selected based on their experience with the research topic; demographic characteristics such as race, gender, and occupation were not considered. To control for possible legal differences in the treatment or recognition of women using violence only individuals living in the United States were considered for the study. The sample population included 10 researchers and 10 practitioners (including four probation officers). Fourteen women and six men received the questionnaire. The race or cultural backgrounds

of the key informants is unknown. Race, culture, and gender were not collected to strengthen the anonymous status of respondents.

### Instrument Design

A mailed, self-administered questionnaire (see Appendix A) was used to gather the opinions of practitioners and researchers in the domestic violence field. Due to the exploratory nature of the topic the questionnaire consisted of open-ended questions in addition to space for additional comments. A qualitative approach was chosen to avoid restricting participants to the predetermined responses required of quantitative research (Patton, 1986). The questionnaire was pretested with the feedback of MSW student colleagues and colleagues at a rape crisis center.

Respondents were asked to explain the interventions they believe are most appropriate for a woman arrested for violence against a male partner, with an emphasis on the potentially confusing dynamics present when a woman has been abused by the man with whom she ultimately uses violence. The first question asked respondents for the interventions they would most likely recommend for a woman arrested for violence against a man by whom the woman was previously abused. This question was placed first in an attempt to avoid influencing respondents by subsequent questions. Additional questions asked about guidelines for assessing whether an arrested woman was acting in self-defense, and the effect on intervention



recommendations when it is known that the arrested woman experienced abuse as a child.

The questionnaire, accompanied by a cover letter with an explanation of the study purpose, the confidential design of the study, and the risks of participating (See Appendix A), was mailed with a self-addressed, stamped return envelope. Recipients received self-addressed, stamped postcards (labeled with their name) and instructions to mail the postcard separately when the questionnaire was completed and mailed. Recipients could check on the postcard that they chose not to participate in the survey. The postcard indicated to the principal investigator that a study subject returned the questionnaire without jeopardizing the anonymity of the questionnaire responses.

The returned questionnaires were opened (and the envelope destroyed) by a student colleague of the principal investigator so that the principal investigator was not able to identify questionnaire respondents by their return envelope postmarks. This precaution was necessary since the sample population is small and the respondents live throughout the United States. Four weeks after the initial questionnaire was mailed, non-respondents (identified as those who did not return a postcard) received a replacement questionnaire with a replacement postcard and a modified cover letter (see Appendix B) encouraging them to complete the questionnaire.



### Limitations of the Design

Using the non-random technique of purposive sampling to select 20 key informants reduced the generalizability of the study results (Rubin & Babbie, 1993). The purposive sampling technique included only visible researchers and practitioners. Practitioners whose work has not been recognized in social service directories were excluded. In addition, because only *published* researchers were included in the study there is the potential for bias; perhaps the sample researchers were published because their views are consistent with acceptable mainstream notions while more radical researchers have been denied publication. In addition, the purposive sampling technique relies on the judgement of the researcher. The study sample is based on the researchers opinion about which key informants to include in the study.

The small sample size limited the amount of demographic information that could be collected without jeopardizing the anonymity of respondents. Therefore, no observations can be made about questionnaire responses based on the race, gender, specific occupation, or geographic location of respondents. Using a mailed questionnaire instead of an interview prohibited the use of follow-up questions by the principal investigator to clarify questionnaire responses.

### Protection of Human Subjects

Measures were taken to protect the questionnaire recipients. The Augsburg College Institutional Review Board process was completed

and the project was given the approval number 95-08-3. The cover letter stated that participation was voluntary and that items could be skipped on the questionnaire without jeopardizing participation in the study. To protect the anonymity of the key informants they were only asked to indicate on the questionnaire whether they were a practitioner, a researcher or both. No further identifying information such as gender and race were requested.

Respondents mailed their questionnaires to a student colleague who separated the questionnaires from their envelopes and destroyed the envelopes and thus, the geographic identifiers. After the deadline for returning questionnaires had been reached the student colleague gave the collected questionnaires to the principal investigator. The student colleague was not involved in any aspect of the research including access to the names of key informants and data analysis. Postcards indicating return of the questionnaires were mailed directly to the principal investigator. Returned postcards were stored in a locked file and destroyed once the replacement questionnaires and postcards were mailed. Only information about the number of practitioners and researchers who returned the questionnaire was recorded by the principal investigator. Returned questionnaires were stored in a locked file and destroyed no later than July 1, 1996.

### Data Collection and Analysis

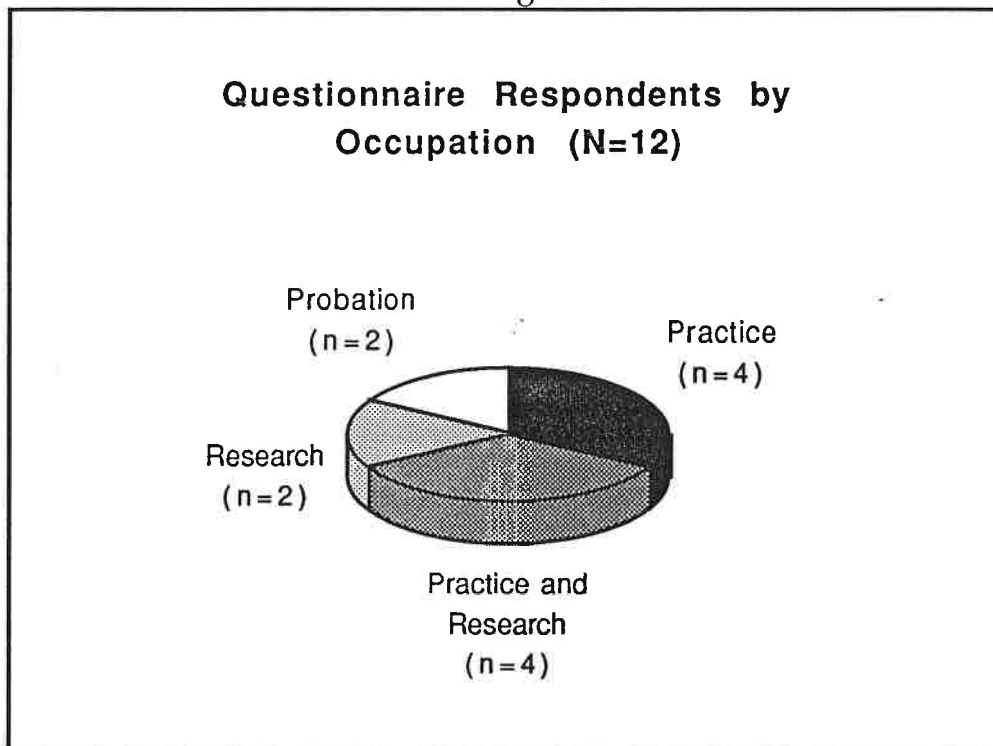
Open-ended qualitative questions were content analyzed (Rubin & Babbie, 1993) and standard response categories were created for each

item. The number of responses that could be interpreted to fit each response category are reported. Response categories with only one respondent are also reported. Returned questionnaires with skipped items were included in the data analysis and these skipped items are reported as "no response". Since respondents were not limited in the number of responses they could give for each item the number of responses to any one question may exceed the number of returned questionnaires.

#### IV. Findings

Twelve questionnaires were returned for a response rate of 60%. Rubin and Babbie (1993) suggest that a 50% response rate for a mail survey is "adequate" for reporting and analysis, while 60% is "good" and 70% is "very good". Although respondents were not asked to disclose their specific occupations, two of the practitioners self-identified as probation officers. Because of the sometimes unique themes identified, their responses are reported separately from the

Figure 1



practitioner responses. There may be additional probation officers included with the practitioner respondents but they did not self-identify as such. Figure 1 illustrates the occupations of the respondents. The eight non-respondents included four individuals who indicated on their return postcards that they chose not to participate and one questionnaire that was returned unopened because the address was incorrect.

Returned questionnaires with skipped items are included in the findings summary. Skipped items are reported as "No response". Since respondents were not limited in the number of responses they could give for each item, many questions have more responses than the number of respondents.

Findings are presented for each question of the questionnaire (See Appendix A). The findings include a table for each question that indicates the total number of responses for each identified theme and specifics about how each category of respondents answered each item.

### Treatment Recommendations

Respondents identified the treatment or intervention they would be most likely to recommend for a woman who was arrested for using violence against a man by whom the woman had been previously abused. Most respondents cited more than one intervention. As shown in Table 1, interventions associated with survivors of violence (i.e. developing a safety plan, attending a survivor's group, increasing access to battered women's services) were the most common responses

Table 2 Does Self-Defense Affect a Treatment Recommendation?

Response	Occupation			
	Probation	Practice	Research	Both
Yes	1	3	1	3
No	1	1		1
No Response			1	

### Assessment of Self-Defense

Respondents were asked to specify the factors they include in an assessment of self-defense in three areas: (a) circumstances of the violent incident, (b) history of the relationship, and (c) legal circumstances of the arrest. Respondents were also given the opportunity to list “additional factors” to include in an assessment of whether a woman was using violence in self-defense when she was arrested. The responses to these questions about assessment of self-defense were sorted into four categories: (a) circumstances of the violent incident, (b) relationship history, (c) legal circumstances of the arrest, and (d) characteristics of the couple. The categories were identified during the analysis of the responses. The responses in each of these categories are summarized in Tables 3 through 6.

Table 3 Incident Circumstances to Include in an Assessment

Response	Occupation			
	Probation	Practice	Research	Both
Presence or abuse of children		1		3
Threat of violence by male (overt or covert)		1		2
Reason for her violence	1		1	
Corroboration of story by friends or family	1		1	
Initiator of the incident				1
Type of violence				1
Premeditation of her violence				1
Rule out retaliation		1		
Male's description of incident		1		

Responses to the question about how previous abuse by the man should influence an assessment of self-defense have been combined with general factors about relationship history to include in an assessment and are reported in Table 4. The most common response was that a history of abuse may have contributed to the woman's level of fear during the most recent violent episode (n=7). For example, one respondent stated, "Such a history indicates that even if her partner

was not actually abusing her in this instance, she may have felt she was in danger and acted to prevent abuse”.

One practitioner was unsure how a history of past abuse would affect an assessment:

If she has been abused and battered for a long time, I believe a woman is less likely to defend herself or fight back as she probably knows it could get worse. A younger woman who is abused for the first time would probably be more likely to defend herself or fight back.

The only respondent who indicated that past abuse would not affect an assessment explained that although the assessment would not change, the intervention would. If the woman had had no prior counseling this respondent would recommend counseling.



Table 4 Relationship History to Include in an Assessment

Response	Occupation			
	Probation	Practice	Research	Both
Previous abuse that contributed to her fear	1	1	1	4
History of abuse in the relationship		2		3
Extent of her past injuries	1		1	1
Use of violence by her to control her partner		1		1
Duration of relationship				1
Stalking or harassment by him				1
Living arrangement				1
Attempts by her to leave relationship				1
Financial dependence of the woman				1
Isolation of woman from people or resources				1
Self-blame by woman for past abuse by him				1
Affect of past abuse on her self-esteem				1
Affect of past abuse on her ability to make decisions				1

Respondents were asked to indicate how they have included the legal circumstances of an arrest in an assessment of self-defense. As noted in Table 5, four respondents indicated that arrest is a police

Table 5 Legal Circumstances to Include in an Assessment

Response	Occupation			
	Probation	Practice	Research	Both
Precinct policies		1		1
State policies		1		
Police confirmation of previous assault by man	1			
Previous calls to police			1	
Failure of police to respond to previous calls				1
Attitude of arresting officer				1
Training of officer in sorting out the circumstances when two people are accused of violence				1

decision and does not affect their assessment. One of these respondents suggested that assessors need to ignore the presence or absence of an arrest as this may bias their assessments. One respondent stated that it is important for a practitioner to know the legal circumstances of an arrest but that these circumstances are difficult to learn since each municipality drafts its own policies. One respondent would review the

arrest policy of the precinct, consider the attitude of the police person, and determine how the arresting officer responds when two people are involved in an incident. (i.e. Does the officer listen to both sides and attempt to sort out the situation? Is the officer trained in responding to domestic violence? Does the arresting officer side with male partners?)

Although respondents were not asked to specify characteristics of the couple, this emerged as an area to include in an assessment. Respondent's suggestions of characteristics of a couple to include in an assessment are reported in Table 6.

Table 6 Couple Characteristics to Include in an Assessment

Response	Occupation			
	Probation	Practice	Research	Both
Chemical dependency	1	1		
Mental illness		1		
Age		1		
Size		1		
Physical abilities		1		
Race	1			
Religion	1			
Education	1			
Economic situation	1			
Childhood abuse of either individual	1			
Family system	1			
Social status of male partner				1

### History of Abuse as a Child

Respondents were asked how knowledge that a woman had been abused as a child would influence intervention recommendations. The responses to this question are summarized in Table 7. The most common response was that childhood abuse was an issue to explore in counseling and it was separate from the woman's current use of violence (n=7). Specific types of therapy mentioned were individual (n=2), voluntary (n=1), and feminist therapy with a focus on family of origin work (n=1).

Table 7 Would Knowledge of Abuse as a Child Affect an Assessment?

Response	Occupation			
	Probation n=1	Practice n=4	Research n=2	Both n=4
No				
Issue to explore in counseling	1	4	1	1
Provides a context for understanding				1
Maybe				
If past abuse is a current problem			1	
If she is unaware of its impact				1
If abuse contributed to fear				1
No response	1			

### The Affect of Agency Guidelines on Assessments

Respondents shared how agency guidelines have affected their intervention recommendations. The responses to this question are summarized in Table 8.

Researchers were asked to skip this question. Four non-respondents included the two researchers, one respondent who chose to skip this question and one respondent who did not understand the question. Of the eight responses to this question, three individuals were not affected by agency guidelines because demand for services for arrested women has led their agencies to develop services for this population.

Table 8 How Agency Guidelines Affect Intervention Recommendations

Response	Occupation			
	Probation	Practice	Research	Both
Workplace supports my philosophy <sup>a</sup>	1	3		2
The law is the law	1			
No response		1	2	2

<sup>a</sup>Three of these respondents designed their agency's program for female offenders

### Affect of Treatment Availability on Recommendations

Respondents were asked how the availability of treatment and intervention services has affected their recommendations regarding appropriate services for women arrested for violence. Researchers were asked to skip this question. Two respondents indicated that there is a lack of resources while seven respondents felt services were adequate. Of the seven respondents who indicated that treatment is adequate, four are providing services to women arrested for violence and two indicated that resources are adequate in their communities but they believe services are limited in other communities or for women of color. These two respondents are categorized as “adequate”. None of the respondents explained how treatment availability influences their treatment recommendations.

Table 9 Treatment Availability for Arrested Women

Response	Occupation			
	Probation	Practice	Research	Both
Adequate <sup>a</sup>		4		3
Inadequate	2			
No Response			2	1

<sup>a</sup>Four of these respondents provide the services they need for women arrested for domestic violence

### Additional Comments

Nine respondents chose to include additional comments on their questionnaires. Three of these responses reflected a belief that it is difficult to compare the use of violence by men and women. Two respondents mentioned the sense of responsibility women often feel for their partners' violence. Each of the responses is listed verbatim.

#### Violence by men and women is different.

My fear is that battered women who are arrested are offered the same treatment as men who batter and the issues are totally different. There are women who use violence, but there are very few women who batter.  
(Practitioner)

I believe we must always keep in mind the fact that men abuse/batter because they wish to control their partner, because (in their eyes) abuse works, and because our culture allows - sometimes even encourages - them to do so. Women are violent for very different reasons, many times for self-preservation, often to protect their children. (Practitioner)

-the issues for women arrested are very similar to voluntary clients -few women fit the 'hard core' perpetrator role -finding the balance between victim and perpetrator services is difficult - some women clearly need victim services and should never have been arrested - other women more clearly need perpetrator and anger management services - would be nice if women who have been arrested could be divided into two groups with services being more slanted in one direction or the other - Finding the balance is difficult  
(Both)

Women may feel responsible for partner's violence.

Women (victim-survivors) arrested for violence often carry an additional level of shame and self blame, or think they must deserve their partner's abuse. They often cling to the belief that if they change their behavior their abusive partner will suddenly begin to treat them respectfully. It is a struggle for them to let go of responsibility for his violence. (Practitioner)

It was great for the male groups to have a woman who had been arrested be a member - It really broke thru their denial. It wasn't good for the women who already took on too much responsibility. So our coordinated project implemented our program. (Practitioner)

Miscellaneous responses.

Because not too many women are charged with domestic violence - there are not many programs available - not enough clients to keep them busy. (Probation Officer)

Accountability is necessary but the root of violence must be a priority. (Probation Officer)

Careful screening of the circumstances needs occur by police and prosecutors. Referrals to abuser treatment should not be made of women acting in self-defense. (Both)

These women often deserve treatment and always appreciate it. Unfortunately, they are often 'used' as political pawns in the debate over the value of mandatory arrest. Treatment needs are different from the issue of whether they should have been arrested. (Both)



### Additional Themes

In addition to the themes identified in the responses to each item of the questionnaire, themes were identified across items and among respondents with similar backgrounds. The responses of the probation officers reflected their position in the legal system and are worth noting separately from the rest of the responses. Other themes that were identified across questions include concern about women being arrested for violence used in self-defense, a preference by many respondents for survivor services for women arrested for violence, and an interest in providing counseling for arrested women.

### Probation Officers

The probation officer's answers to the questionnaire reflected the lack of choice they have in making decisions about women arrested for violence. For example, "The law is the law" and "it would affect my recommendation but most cases have already been referred out for therapy or consultation before reaching me." Their legal perspective was evident in responses such as, "accountability is necessary" and "mitigating factor needs to be present to give the courts a clear picture why certain behaviors exist." Each of these respondents named specific community programs that they would use for an arrested woman. One probation officer indicated that the same referrals would be made regardless of the reason for violence, perpetration or self-defense, because options were limited.

### Arrests for Violence Used in Self-Defense

Four respondents offered their opinions that women should not be arrested for violence used in self-defense. One respondent indicated that in the geographical area in which the respondent works it is clearly stated in the domestic violence laws that individuals with a history as victims of domestic violence should never be arrested. Two of these respondents believed that inappropriate arrests should be avoided at the police level, therefore, they assume the police have already ruled out self-defense as the motive for violence before women are court-ordered to their services. One practitioner suggested that eliminating inappropriate arrests needs to be done at the legislative level and through police education.

Two respondents explained the benefits they feel women have received by being court-ordered to their programs, regardless of whether the arrests were appropriate. One provider shared that his or her program for offenders is now able to work with women who are survivors but who did not initially identify themselves as such. The women feel comfortable attending an offender's group and once they are in the group they can receive the appropriate services for their survivor issues. Another respondent expressed a concern that women are being used as political pawns in a debate about mandatory arrest. The court-ordered participants in this respondent's program were in need of services and were able to access them due to their arrests.

### Survivor Services

Of the ten respondents who consider themselves, at least in part, to be practitioners, five of them have designed (n=4) or provided (n=1) programming for women arrested for domestic violence. These programs include survivor services such as developing safety plans and increasing awareness of battered women's services or a combination of survivor and perpetrator services. Two of the program designers were clear in stating that they believe all women who use violence are survivors of violence. One program designer and one program provider believe that the issues are different for men and women who use violence and that "women are not 'hard core' perpetrators".

In addition to the respondents who designed or provided programs, two respondents indicated a preference for providing survivor services for a woman arrested for violence against a partner by whom the woman was previously abused, even if the violence was not done in self-defense. If the violence was done in self-defense, two additional respondents indicated a preference for survivor-oriented services.

In all, nine of the twelve respondents indicated a preference for survivor services for a woman arrested for domestic violence. The two probation officers did not state their preference about appropriate services but indicated that they have to follow the orders of the court. One researcher did not state a preference for survivor services and recommended "cognitive-behavioral interventions to address current

## V. Discussion

This section includes a summary of the limitations of the study; guidelines for assessment and intervention when a woman is arrested for domestic violence; implications of the study for practice, research, and policy; and conclusions.

### Limitations of Study Findings

Since the questionnaire emphasized women acting in self-defense and women who had previously been abused by their partner respondents may have been biased in their interpretation of women's use of violence. For example, the first item on the questionnaire described an arrest of a woman who had been previously abused by her partner. This language may have biased respondents against the possibility that some arrested women have never been abused by their partners or are the primary perpetrators of violence in their relationship.

The questionnaire did not provide a definition of self-defense although respondents were asked to offer input based on knowledge that a woman had acted in "self-defense." Without defining "self-defense" it is unclear whether respondents were referring to the legal definition of self-defense, personal opinions about self-defense or an agency's definition of self-defense.

Although not all questionnaire items were referring to previously abused women, the subtle differences in language may have gone unnoticed by respondents. For example, two questions were referring to

violence in self-defense while one question was referring to any use of violence. Respondents may have overlooked this change in focus.

A limitation of content analysis is that the reliability of the study relies on the opinions and interpretations about questionnaire results from a single researcher. Another researcher may have categorized responses differently.

### Practice Guidelines

Information from the literature review and questionnaire findings was used to develop practice guidelines for working with women arrested for domestic violence. Assessment and intervention, the two general categories that formed the basis for this study, provide a framework for the guidelines. Guidelines based on findings from the questionnaire are cited as "Study Survey."

### Assessing domestic violence.

**1. Develop a standard tool for practitioners at your agency to use in assessing whether a woman was the perpetrator or survivor of a violent incident.** Use recommendations from Tables 3 through 6 to inform the development of an assessment tool. The literature review (see Cascardi & Vivian, 1995; Hamberger, 1991, 1994; O'Leary, Vivian & Malone. 1992; Zemsky, 1990) and study survey offer similar areas to include in an assessment including history of violence in the relationship, primary reason for the woman's use of violence, and circumstances of the violent incident that led to the arrest.

**2. Determine the motive for the woman's use of violence such as self-defense, retaliation, abuse, or some other factor** (Heer, 1992; Lie, Schilit, Bush, Montagne, Reyes, 1991; Renzetti, 1988, 1992). The circumstances of the relationship and the context of the violence must be considered in order to understand a woman's motives for using violence. Presence or abuse of children, economic dependence on the man and a history of violence (that has influenced the woman to fear the man) are some of the factors to include in assessing the motive for a woman's use of violence (Study Survey).

**3. Use consultation or review with a supervisor to minimize the potential for personal opinions to get in the way of an objective assessment.** The study survey indicated that there is an array of opinions about the extent to which an assessment is necessary and the implications of self-defensive violence for an intervention recommendation. Consultation and supervision about assessment and treatment planning will provide an opportunity to review whether a biased or uninformed assessment or treatment plan is being developed.

**4. Be aware of the potential for inaccuracies in self-reports of violence** (Cascardi & Vivian, 1995; Langhinrichsen-Rohling & Vivian, 1994). A victim may believe she was abusive (Hart, 1986; Leeder, 1988; Zemsky, 1990), incongruities in the accuracy of self-reports have been observed (Cascardi & Vivian, 1995; Langhinrichsen-Rohling & Vivian, 1994; Straus, 1979), and women may over-estimate their use of violence (Marshall &



Rose, 1990). Both under-reporting (Stets & Straus, 1990) and over-reporting (Langhinrichsen-Rohling & Vivian, 1994) are possible.

Social desirability bias can be minimized through avoiding the use of subjective terms such as "abuse" and concentrating on a description of the circumstances of a violent incident (O'Leary, Vivian & Malone, 1992).

"Normalizing" violence by talking with an interviewee about the prevalence of domestic violence can also assist in minimizing social desirability bias (Arias & Beach, 1987). An assessment that includes both written and verbal reports of past violence can decrease inaccuracies and provide a multimodal assessment (Cascardi & Vivian, 1995; O'Leary, Vivian & Malone, 1992). Additional recommendations for obtaining an accurate self-report include asking open-ended, non-leading questions (Heer, 1992) and asking questions that uncover the context and reason for the violence (Hamberger, 1991, 1994; Heer, 1992; Zemsky, 1990; Study Survey).

**5. Avoid being influenced to believe a woman is a perpetrator based on the tone of her voice, her appearance or her angry expressions (Hart, 1986; Linda & Avreayl, 1986; Zemsky, 1990).** A woman may express anger about her partner during an assessment even when she is the survivor of violence in the relationship.

**6. Know the domestic abuse laws and policies in your area.** This will broaden your understanding of the circumstances in which a client was arrested (Study Survey). Laws and policies with which to become familiar

include mandatory arrest, pro-arrest, warrantless misdemeanor arrests, and laws prohibiting dual arrests.

**7. Avoid concluding that an arrest indicates wrongdoing** (Study Survey). Knowledge of arrest status may bias an assessment of self-defense.

Planning appropriate interventions.

**1. Address a woman's history of childhood abuse in a treatment plan.** Although this history does not affect an assessment of self-defense, it may be an indicator that individual or group counseling would be an appropriate treatment recommendation (Study Survey).

**2. Develop gender-specific interventions.** Interventions designed for men may not be effective for women since violence by men and women may have different motivations (Bograd, 1990; Saunders, 1988; Study Survey).

**3. Offer services and resources to a woman even if you believe she was inappropriately arrested.** A woman may benefit from services even if she was wrongly arrested (Study Survey).

**4. Be prepared to justify treatment decisions if your agency recommends different treatment for women and men who have been arrested.** The extensive literature about gender bias in the courts (see, for example, Bishop & Frazier, 1984; Daly, 1987,1989; Farnsworth & Teske,



1995) suggests that there is ongoing concern that arrested women are treated more leniently than men.

**5. Determine a definition of “self-defense” that fits your agency’s purpose.** Legal self-defense and psychological self-defense have different meanings (Study Survey). Although a woman’s behavior may not qualify as “legal” self-defense, practitioners do not have to operate within this legal definition. If a practitioner believes the woman was acting in self-defense an intervention can be appropriately designed.

**6. Err on the side of allowing a possible abuser to use survivor services when it is unclear, even after an assessment, whether a woman was the perpetrator or survivor of violence in the relationship** (Heer, 1991; Zemsky, 1990). No assessment tool will give a definitive answer about whether a woman was the perpetrator or survivor of violence in a relationship.

### Implications of the Study

#### Social work practice.

The practice guidelines can be used to inform the decisions of social workers, probation officers, and offender group facilitators when working with a woman arrested for domestic violence. The practice guidelines can be operationalized to design an assessment tool which meets the specific needs of an agency. Areas to consider in the creation of an assessment tool

include: the length of an assessment interview, the location of the interview, and the impact of local police policies on arrests and referrals for treatment.

The practice guidelines aid practitioners in making consistent, objective decisions regarding assessment and treatment planning for arrested women. The results of the study stress the importance of understanding the relationship context in which a woman used violence in order to plan the most appropriate intervention.

#### Policy.

Current laws could be reviewed and evaluated to determine their effectiveness in curbing domestic violence. It may be necessary to review whether there is a more appropriate way for a woman to receive services for domestic violence than through arrest; particularly when the arrest was inappropriate or outside the guidelines of the law but the woman did, ultimately, benefit from the services she received. The legal definition of self-defense may need to be expanded to include information about fear of a partner that may have developed over time in a relationship.

One-third of the questionnaire respondents expressed concern that women are being inappropriately arrested for domestic violence. Current police training practices could be reviewed to evaluate whether police officers are properly trained to assess domestic violence calls, particularly calls where both parties used violence.

future studies to include an interview instead of a questionnaire so that follow-up questions could be used to clarify participant's responses.

### Conclusions and Recommendations

The magnitude and variety of responses to questions about assessing self-defense confirmed this writer's belief that there is currently no standard assessment approach. The broad scope of opinions about the need for an in-depth assessment suggest that the intervention or treatment a woman receives is based to a great extent on the subjective beliefs of the practitioner. Responses to the questionnaire suggest the need for improved legislation and police training to minimize the number of unnecessary arrests while ensuring that individuals still receive the treatment they deserve. As long as women are being arrested for domestic violence against a male partner and the possibility exists that the arrest was unfair, the proposed guidelines assist practitioners in making appropriate assessment and treatment decisions.

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## Appendix A

### Cover Letter and Questionnaire

November 27, 1995

Michele R. Braley  
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Recipient Address

Dear (Recipient's Name):

You are invited to participate in a research project about women arrested for domestic violence against a male partner. You are receiving the enclosed questionnaire because you are knowledgeable about the needs of women arrested for violence. You have been identified through your research about domestic violence or through your position in a social service agency. Even if you have limited experience working with women arrested for domestic violence, your insight into this emerging issue is important.

This study is being conducted as part of my master of social work thesis at Augsburg College, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

The purpose of this study is to gather recommendations about the most appropriate intervention once a woman has been arrested for domestic violence against a male partner. Responses from this questionnaire will be used by me to develop practice guidelines for working with women arrested for domestic violence in heterosexual relationships. The practice guidelines will include information about the gender-specific needs of women arrested for violence in addition to information about whether an assessment of self-defense is necessary in planning an intervention.

Your responses to this questionnaire are confidential. You will not be asked to provide any identifying information on the questionnaire. Although you will be asked to indicate on the questionnaire whether

you are a practitioner or a researcher, I will be unable to identify you through this information since multiple individuals in each category are being included in this survey. Your returned questionnaire will be separated from its envelope by a student colleague (and the envelope destroyed) so that I cannot identify your questionnaire by its postmark. In the writing of the research report and practice guidelines I will not include information that could identify you.

If you agree to be in this study, please complete the enclosed questionnaire (this will take approximately 20 minutes) and return it in the stamped envelope that has been provided. **You may choose to skip any questions that are uncomfortable to answer without jeopardizing your involvement in this study.** Please also mail the enclosed postcard, separately from the envelope. Your returned postcard will indicate to me that you have returned your questionnaire while protecting the confidentiality of your responses. **Please return the enclosed questionnaire and postcard (separately) by December 11, 1995.** Questionnaire recipients who do not return the enclosed postcard will receive a replacement questionnaire.

Although reporting about your work with women arrested for domestic violence is a potentially sensitive area, any risks to completing the questionnaire have been minimized by the confidential design of the research study. There are no known direct benefits for participating in this study. Your decision whether or not to return the enclosed questionnaire will not affect your current or future relations with Augsburg College.

Please feel free to contact me at (612) 822-6653 with questions or comments about this research project. If you would like to receive a copy of the completed practice guidelines please contact me by mail or by phone. My thesis advisor is Dr. Carol Kuechler and she can be reached at (612) 330-1439 with any questions.

**Thank you for your consideration of this request and for returning the enclosed questionnaire and postcard by December 11, 1995. To protect your confidentiality please do not write your name on your questionnaire.**

Sincerely,

Michele R. Braley  
IRB #95-08-3

## WORKING WITH WOMEN ARRESTED FOR VIOLENCE: Questionnaire

This data is confidential. To protect your confidentiality please do not write your name or other identifying information anywhere on this questionnaire. Also, please return this questionnaire separately from the provided postcard.

Indicate your occupation(s) related to working with women arrested for violence (please check both if they apply):

☐ Researcher

☐ Practitioner  
(includes Probation  
Officers)

While you are completing these questions please think about women who have been referred to you, who you have included in a research project, or who have been court ordered to work with you **because they have been arrested for violence against a male partner**. Continue writing on the back of these pages if necessary.

1. What is the intervention or treatment you would be most likely to recommend for a woman who was arrested for using violence against a man by whom she was previously abused (emotionally, physically, sexually or psychologically)?

2. If you believed a woman was arrested for using violence in self-defense against her male partner, would this affect your recommendation about what type of intervention or treatment is appropriate for the woman? Please explain.

If believing a woman was acting in self-defense would not affect your recommendation about intervention or treatment, please skip to question #4.

The purpose of question #3 is to determine what factors you would use to assess whether an arrested woman was acting in self-defense.

3a. What **circumstances leading up to and surrounding the violent episode** should be included in an assessment of whether an arrested woman was acting in self-defense? Please explain.

3b. How should a **history of past abuse with this partner** affect an assessment of self-defense?

3c. How should the **legal circumstances of an arrest** (i.e. the existence of mandatory arrest policies or pro-arrest policies) be included in an assessment of whether a woman was acting in self-defense?

3d. What **additional factors** should be included in an assessment of whether a woman was acting in self-defense when she was arrested for using violence against a male partner? Please explain.

4. If you knew a woman arrested for violence had been physically, emotionally, psychologically or sexually abused as a child; how would this influence your recommendation for intervention or treatment?

**If you only checked "researcher" on the first page, please skip to question #7.**

5. How have **agency guidelines** affected your recommendations regarding appropriate intervention or treatment for women arrested for violence against male partners.

6. How has the **availability of treatment and intervention services for women** affected your recommendations regarding appropriate services for women arrested for violence?

7. Please share any additional comments you may have about intervention or treatment for women arrested for violence against a male partner.

**Thank you for your willingness to complete this questionnaire. Please return it by January 16 in the provided envelope. Also, please mail the enclosed postcard.**

## Appendix B

### Follow-Up Cover Letter

January 2, 1996

Michele R. Braley  
Campus Box 401  
Augsburg College  
2211 Riverside Avenue  
Minneapolis, MN 55454-1351

Recipient Address

Dear (Recipient's Name):

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I have not yet received a postcard indicating that you returned your questionnaire so I am sending you a replacement questionnaire, return envelope, and postcard. If you have already returned your questionnaire please disregard this letter.

If you agree to be in this study, please complete the enclosed questionnaire (this will take approximately 20 minutes) and return it in the stamped envelope that has been provided. **You may choose to skip any questions that are uncomfortable to answer without jeopardizing your involvement in this study.** Please also mail the enclosed postcard, separately from the envelope. Your returned postcard will indicate to me that you have returned your questionnaire while protecting the confidentiality of your responses. **Please return the enclosed questionnaire and postcard (separately) by January 16, 1996.**

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Sincerely,

Michele R. Braley  
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